



The Oblate

News Magazine of the Oblates of Saint John's Abbey

June 2018

Volume 62, Number 2

Oblate Retreat July 13-15, 2018

For years we have asked Benedictine monks and sisters to give the presentations at the summer retreat. This year we decided to do something new. For our four conferences we thought it would be great to hear from oblates themselves. That is, an oblate or oblate couple will give conferences as listed below.

Jan Robitcher—Reverence in Prayer

What does it mean to "see to it that our mind is in harmony with our voice"?

We will examine Chapter 19 of *The Rule*: Recollection in Chanting. We will experience what it means to sing with mind and heart in harmony, using music from *The Hymnal 1982*, several psalm settings and some Taize and other chants.

Teresa J. Roberts—Service to Others

The theological foundation for RB 34 on kitchen service is given right at the beginning: "The brothers should serve one another." The reason for this service is to love one another. The Gospels and the entire New Testament are very clear: to love is to serve. Jesus himself tells us that the one who is greatest is not the one who sits at table but the one who serves. RB 71, on mutual obedience (service), is relevant for oblates as well as for monastics.

Julio and Mark DeLaRosa—Stability

Why is stability so important for Benedict? How does the *Rule* guide monks in their vow of stability? Is geographical location a source of stability?

How can oblates live out this virtue? Attention to relationships within home, family, marriage, friendships, Christian community, Saint John's Abbey and our oblate community.

Nicholas Tangen—Oblates in Movements for Justice

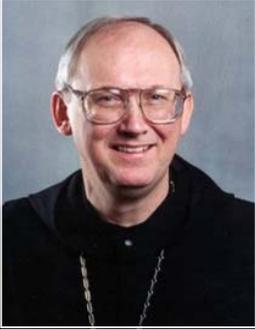
We are living in a historical moment where movements for justice and equity are gaining ground and participants. What can Benedictine oblates bring to these efforts? What is it about Benedictine spirituality that can ensure our work for justice is centered in the Gospel and on transformation that looks like Christ? These are some of the questions we'll explore before celebrating Eucharist on Sunday.

Retreat Registration Information

To register online, go to saintjohnsabbey.org/events/summer-oblate-retreat/ — **To register by surface mail**, complete the registration form that is included inside this newsletter and return it as soon as possible. Registration must be received by July 5, 2018. This is a firm deadline to permit adequate preparation of facilities and services. Check in at Mary Hall on Friday, July 13, 1-7 p.m.

Thanks to additional donations some oblates make, some sponsorship aid is available. If you need help, request it in the comment space at the end of the form.

Message from Abbot John



Our call to holiness is an invitation to each one of us to share in the life of the Trinity. Question: Is the Holy Spirit original to Christian experience? Not by a long shot. The Spirit is clearly present in the creation and is recognized in the description of the work of

the prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel; in Saul and David and some of the other kings, in the wisdom literature.

The Spirit is at work in Egypt, Rome, Assyria, Babylon, China, India, in the cosmos beyond the Milky Way galaxy. The incarnation and the testimony in the Gospels opens up the reality of Trinity – God the creator, Word made flesh, and Paraclete. Passages such as the baptism of Jesus and the Transfiguration are classical Trinitarian scenes. The Trinitarian formula is already present in the Gospel tradition: “Go out into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel, baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” This formula is part of the early tradition and is used liturgically long before the Church articulated what it means.

The key insight that broke things open is that God is for the world, God is for the creation, for us. God is oriented dynamically toward the world. The Trinitarian God is an extrovert: the one who continues to create in the world, the God who so loves the world that the Word is made Flesh, the God whose Spirit continues to bring love into the world, who gives gifts to the human community and to the Church.

Our call as Christians, monks, and Benedictine oblates is to be drawn into the life, the mystery of the Trinity. *A robust Trinitarian spirituality opens things up for us.* It gives us a larger view of the spiritual world, a richer sense of the way that God is involved in the world. We will hear the biblical accounts that can barely speak of the mystery that is being encountered, pushing against the limits of language. Above all, we develop a sense of gratitude for the richness of the Christian tradition.

Message from Father Michael



You and I are created in the image of God. We are made in the image of a Creator God. Just look at the earth as a dazzling work of art. To create is to live out our lives as made in the image of God. We are to be life-giving, generative, imaginative, full of fecundity, and creative.

Creating is not just for artists and musicians; we are all gifted by God with creative potential. What do you create? Our gifts, whatever they may be, are simply to create a better and more life-giving world.

God is an amazing Creator! Praise God for creatures that run, walk, swim, slither, waddle, hop, and fly. Praise God for things rooted to the earth that reach their branches to the sky. The first words of the Bible, “In the beginning, God created.” Why did God create? God’s intention and creation’s unique design is fundamentally centered towards relationship, interconnection, and communion.

We believe that the focal point of the creation, the reason for the creation, is love. God creates life so that we can experience love. Everything God does is an expression of love. It is neither trite nor superficial that the scriptures summarize this in three simple words: “God is love.” It’s critical to understand this because, if we are to reclaim our role in the creative process and express our lives as masterful works of art, we too must be sure that our life is the expansion of love.

Our life of faith is less about gathering information about God than it is about expanding imagination. The movement Jesus started was for dreamers and visionaries, not fearful people holding on to the status quo. As Benedictine Joan Chittister writes, “The fundamental question for a Christian isn’t whether there’s life after death, but whether there’s life before death.” Life before death comes to us when we cultivate our creativity with God. In this world we need to be more than just consumers; we have the opportunity to be dreamers and visionaries and creators.

News and Notes

Investiture of Candidates

Jerome Holtzbauer, July 11, 2017
Kevin Keane, March 18, 2018
Dennis Hanson, April 6, 2018
Tom Fate, April 25, 2018

Final Oblation

Erik Floan, February 12, 2018
Anita Bradshaw, March 18, 2018

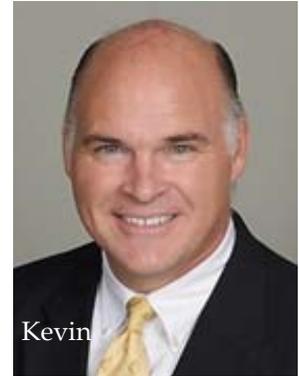
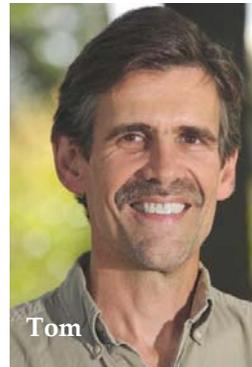
Deaths

Patricia Coyne O'Dougherty, mother of Oblate Patrick, died March 14, 2018.
Bill MacDonald, brother-in-law of Oblate Bill Muldoon, died on Good Friday, March 30, 2018.
Oblate Caroline Nester, 97, died on May 17, 2018.
Jeanine Hawkins, mother of Oblate Mark Hawkins, died on May 18, 2018.
Todd Rolek, nephew of Father Don Tauscher, died on May 18, 2018.
Gerald Braunsky, brother-in-law of Father Don, died on Trinity Sunday, May 27, 2018.

We just recently learned of the deaths of the following oblates. Surprisingly and sadly no one informed us and the newsletters were not returned by postal service as we request. Please know that we do ask all of you oblates to make arrangements with someone to notify the oblate office when you die.

Lyle Vanpelt, Loretto, MN, September 13, 1997
Donald Henn, Wasilla, AK, February 14, 2005
Lee Cotugno, Los Angeles, CA, August 3, 2010
Joseph Forgacs, Pearl River, NY, July 24, 2011
Len Kamien, San Diego, CA, September 9, 2013
Florence Mackay, Lenexa, KS, February 24, 2016
Mary Lou Engeldinger, Cannon Falls, MN, October 1, 2016

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. Let perpetual light shine upon them. Amen



Oblate Prayer

O Loving God, I ask your blessing this day on all the oblates of Saint Benedict and the monks of Saint John's Abbey with whom we are affiliated.

Help us to become people of prayer and peace. Though scattered far and wide, help us to be together in the spirit of your love.

Give us hearts wide enough to embrace each other as well as those whose lives we touch. Enable us to listen and to learn from each other and those around us each day.

May we be models in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities of wise stewardship, dignified human labor, sacred leisure, and reverence for all living things.

Above all, O God, may our presence among others be a constant witness of justice, compassion, and hope to all.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, OSB - Address to Oblate Congress 2017s in Rome

I would like to reflect together with you on the relationship between you as an oblate and the monastery to which you are connected. I want to consider how that relationship keeps guiding you ever more profoundly into a wondrous and mysterious communion with God. What does it mean to be an oblate, to be thus connected to a monastic community? What is your experience of the relationship you find in relating to your monastic community? How is your relationship with God deepened, and how does that have an impact on your day-to-day life, your relationship with others? What expectations do you have of the monastic community of your oblation, and of its individual members? Do you think the monastic community has expectations of you? These are important questions to consider, because if you want your contact with the community of your oblation to be something that enriches you personally, something that gives a spiritual direction to your life, something that has a positive impact on you and the life you lead and establishes ties that continue to grow over time—then you want to think seriously about this relationship. What *can* it mean for you, what do you *want* it to mean for you and others, and *how* do you keep alive and fresh something that is part of your daily life? You must want it to be life-giving for you and for those who are dear to you.

We have to face the fact that you live as lay people in the world. You are people who have a relationship with God through a monastic community, but you also have families, neighbors, friends, co-workers and acquaintances to whom you relate every day. You have an impact on the lives of these people in any variety of ways—sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. People see what you do, observe how you act, how you speak, what you say and what you don't say. As the psychologist says, "All behavior has meaning," or more simply put, "what you do speaks volumes." What we say and do, how we choose to live our lives: this communicates to others what our values are, what is important to us—who we are becoming as men and women of faith and

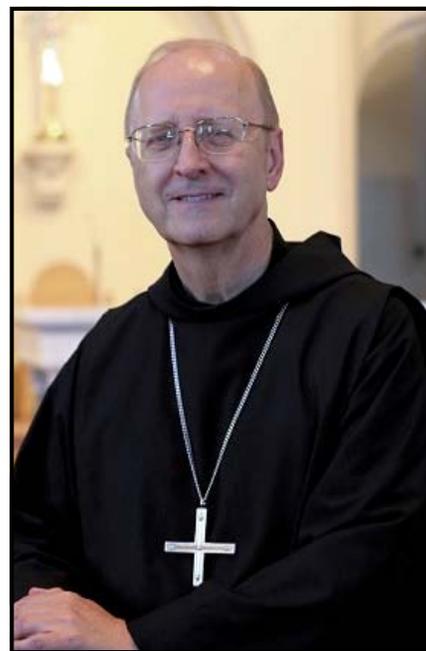
followers of Jesus in the spirit of Saint Benedict. Doing good things for others must be more than a humanitarian gesture: as a Christian your activity must be rooted in God, flowing from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I would like to think that being a Benedictine oblate says something important about your faith to the many people who weave their ways in and out of your life.

...

A good friend of mine, a woman who with her husband raised two wonderful children, once commented to me: "As parents, we have to give our children wings to fly." Parents have the primary task of creating for their children the space to live and grow into adulthood so that they can then move into life on their own; parents must provide interior gifts so their children can make their own way through life.

There is a parallel here with what a monastic community seeks to provide for their oblates. The monastic community, perhaps through an individual monk, nun, or sister, must give the oblate the tools for making a way through life's spiritual and personal experiences. We certainly do not draw our oblates into relationship with our communities to the exclusion of God; nor may we allow them to relegate their relationship with God to some subordinate status. I have seen this happen, and it is wrong.

Some people try to make a monastic community into a surrogate family because of past hurts or disappointments; they try to replace their lost or broken family with the monastic community. It is important



to remember that such intentions are a way to more hurt, disappointment, and discouragement in the end. Family bonds are bonds of blood; a religious community is united by bonds of faith. It is important to maintain the distinction. Spiritual fathers and spiritual mothers who are members of monastic communities must always strive to direct their spiritual children to God and not to themselves or their community. In our world today, so many people experience alienation—within the family, in the neighborhood or workplace, in other experiences of life. The welcome such people find at a monastery is a great gift; but that welcome should always help individuals to move forward in their essential relationship with God through Christ. That is the meaning of the "movement forward" in the life of the oblate: a community that wants what is best for each of its oblates, that strives to help them to keep God at the center of their lives. You, as oblates, share in the mission of a monastic community to live a life in the spirit of Saint Benedict, and to make that life known to others. You have a real role to play as agents of that good in the world around you.

The oblates of a monastery have a special place in the hearts of the members of the community to which they belong. You are a gift to the monastic community, and this is not simply because of what you can do for them. You are a gift to them because of who you are—men and women of faith who join in the great search for true knowledge and an authentic experience of God in your lives. Your prayer for the members of your community, your presence and participation in their common life, reminds them that the teaching and example of Saint Benedict and Saint Scholastica continue to stand as a witness to the Gospel in our world today. You are an extension of the monastic community's witness as you return to your homes, families, workplaces and neighborhoods, attesting to the values and hopes of the Gospel and *The Rule of Saint Benedict*. The movement forward as *Benedictine Communities in Motion* is through fidelity to what is God-centered and Christ-centered. Prayer is an obvious priority, accompanied by the

kind of silence that allows the *ear of the heart*, by listening, to enter into communion with the divine word. That communion then goes forth in lives that give expression to our deepest values, values that have emerged from our reflection on the Gospel and the call of the Church to service in the name of Christ. Our welcome to you here in Rome must not be an accumulation of empty words. Rather let it stand as an invitation to you, our oblates, to enter more fully into the Benedictine charisms of welcome, peace, prayer, and that movement through life that points us toward God in eternity. If we keep that vision before us, we will not be wanting in the things that matter in our earthly pilgrimage, because that vision involves us in *A Way Forward: The Benedictine Community in Motion*, toward nothing less than eternal.

QUESTIONS FROM THE ABBOT PRIMATE

- What does it mean to be an oblate, to be connected to a monastic community?
- How is your relationship with God deepened, and how does that have an impact on your day-to-day life, your relationship with others?
- What expectations do you have of the monastic community of your oblation? What expectations does the monastic community have of you?
- How do you keep alive and fresh something that is part of your daily life?

QUESTIONS FROM THE OBLATE CONGRESS

- Formed by the *Rule* of Saint Benedict, what is our responsibility for our broken world?
- How can we serve as stewards of an abused planet as challenged and inspired by Pope Francis and his encyclical *Laudato Si?*
- How can we experience stability when monastic communities are shrinking and disappearing?
- How can we as oblates create and contribute to communities around us—in our oblate groups and chapters, in our families and neighborhoods, in our workplaces, in society as a whole and even in our monasteries of oblation?

The Love of Learning and the Desire for God is a classic text by a revered author in monastic studies, Benedictine Jean Leclercq. Though I have not read it (more on this later), it has fundamentally changed the way I think about my married life and my academic work. It is the book-form of lectures Leclercq delivered to young monks at the Institute of Monastic Studies at Sant' Anselmo in Rome during the winter of 1955-56. The book is published by Fordham University Press, in its 15th printing, and is as old as I am (which, in the grand scheme of the history it reviews, is not very old). It has been reviewed elsewhere as "the single absolutely indispensable guide for the study of monastic spirituality in the medieval West."

It is a history book, by an academic, published by a university press. This seems a guarantee to keep it off the best-seller lists, and to place it low in the stack of books you have to read at your bedside. Nevertheless, I recommend it to you. I will give you my least important reason first: it has changed the way I relate to my academic work of teaching and scholarship.

As a well-educated Western scientist and academic it seemed self-evident to me that Western Culture, Scholarship, and Science arose from the universities of medieval Europe, but were finally set free by the Renaissance and the Enlightenment movements. I knew vaguely that it was monks and nuns in monasteries who kept the flame of learning alive during the "Dark Ages" but had no idea how that could be associated with the "real" flowering of learning in the Enlightenment. I now find this is wrong-headed on many levels. Leclercq has helped me to see a deeper history that has changed my view of the secular and the sacred.

From the first few chapters of the book I have learned about an earlier split in "ways of knowing," dating back to the 1100s and before. This was the rise of the "scholastics," scholars whose method and goals were associated with the schools in Cathedrals

for clerics (many of which eventually became universities). Leclercq gives some idea of the difference of this new approach from the old by contrasting the writing of Peter Lombard (1100-1160) and St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). Lombard he categorizes as a "scholastic."

The scholastic approach is an objective laying out of facts and different theories and Lombard's goal is to provide solutions to problems of dating, authenticity, form, etc., of the Letters of Paul. There is very little of the personal or that might be counted as advice. Bernard, on the other hand, Leclercq calls a "sapiential" author, one who seeks after wisdom, and uses persuasive language and metaphor to help the reader not only understand, but to desire and experience the Old Testament love poem, the *Song of Songs*. Both authors are superb writers, both are deeply learned, both cite scholarly and systematic sources. But one is looking for knowledge, the other wisdom. One seeks knowledge and offers learning, the other desires God and lures us into God's presence.

And one reads this in such lucid language from Leclercq that one is pulled along by the prose and introduced to the distinctions without (much) pain. It is the detail of his descriptions that is so seductive. One every page one finds a gem of language or story or desire. And so he has taught me that the tradition in which I am steeped is the scholarly, even scholastic one, and that I should more care for the Sapiential tradition, or better, learn to value them both. This has changed my teaching; I ask students to reflect more on how our learning changes us and our scholarship. The more important reason is that Leclercq has changed my marriage. I have always thought of the marriage Almut Furchert and I share as a kind of community in search of God,



and thus in many ways monastic. We often discuss how the *Rule* of Benedict applies in our marriage. Perhaps unintentionally, Leclercq has changed the way I think about this too.

I was surprised to read, at the end of the “Sacred Learning” chapter, that the Old Testament book most read and commented in medieval monasteries was the *Song of Songs*. What? Not those other 150 songs I chant at home and in the choir? But an erotic love poem? And here is where the “Desire” in his title comes in. The *Song of Songs* binds heaven and earth together in the earthly, deeply human metaphor of the lover’s desire. Medieval monastics loved it as a meditation on the desire for God.

I now see that I am blessed to live both sides of this metaphor, with someone else who also seeks God (Almut is an oblate candidate at Saint Benedict’s Monastery). That both sides are sacred, and in their pain, desire, and joy, are both God working in me to draw me to God’s self. And I also see that my scholarly work is of a piece with it, since it is now mostly animated by the desire for God.

So, I invite you to not-read this book the way I have – slowly, dipping in to savor things, then stopping when it becomes too dense (I have still not read some sections). Skip over the Latin phrases and quotes, concentrate on the small jewels like this poem, found on page 137, titled “The Monk who slept during the office.” It tells, perhaps, of a short dream he had while snoozing:

The Abbot: My son, bow your head at the Gloria Patri.

The Devil: He will not bow before he has broken his fetters.

The Abbot: Lord, so that this lamb shall not perish, deliver him from his bonds and from his enemy.

God: I free the captive, it is up to you to chastise the negligent.

Monk: Sooner would I have my head cut off than fall asleep again.

Mutual Respect and Acceptance

Oblate Ron Joki reports on the Joan of Arc Chapter that met on Pentecost Sunday.

We celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit on diverse peoples, each speaking in their own language but being understood by all, each embraced by a new spirit of wonder and humility. We believe that they understood that God loved and valued them equally even though they were of different regions and cultures.

In light of this, we discussed how God calls us to encounter those outside our own religious and cultural experience, asking what are some ways that we can show respect for their customs, appearance and ways of worship? In our experience, what gifts do we receive from other cultures and faith traditions?

Saint Benedict: All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matt 25:35).*

Pope Francis: In a world where various forms of modern tyranny seek to suppress religious freedom or try to reduce it to a subculture without right to a voice in the public square, or to use religion as a pretext for hatred and brutality, it is imperative that the followers of the various religious traditions join their voices in calling for peace, tolerance and respect for the dignity and the rights of all.

Ourselves: Our rich religious traditions seek to offer meaning and direction, having an enduring power to open new horizons, to stimulate thought, to expand the mind and heart (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 256). They call us to conversion, reconciliation, concern for the future of society, self-sacrifice in the service of the common good, and compassion for those in need. At the heart of our traditions, our spiritual mission is to proclaim the truth and dignity of the human person and all human rights.

Today we have much that calls us to action and many opportunities to express God’s love to one another. With the assistance of the Holy Spirit we are challenged to work together to combat racism, fear of other peoples, and hatred based on religion, language or lifestyle. Or hatred of anything else.

Pentecost Is Everyday

The story of the Tower of Babel is one of the great parables of the Old Testament. On the one hand it tries to explain the variety of languages that impedes seamless communication among people. On the other hand, it explains why humans as a group have such a hard time staying on topic and on mission. One day we all agree on a common goal, but the next day rugged individualism and tribalism interfere with the best of common pursuits.

Beyond that, the Tower of Babel is a parable of hubris. Somehow people had come to the conclusion that they had created themselves. In a flight of fancy they believed that they were like God or perhaps no longer needed God. They imagined themselves to be almighty; and the Tower of Babel was only one of several instances in which God disabused them of that notion.

That's a key bit of context for Pentecost. Gathered in an upper room and afraid of the world on the other side of the door, the disciples were paralyzed with fear. They locked the door, I suppose in hopes that the world might go away. Then came the Spirit, and with the Spirit came the power to break free of the consequences of Babel. Variety of languages no longer constrained them. They spoke of the Lord in all languages, and in their new-found freedom the sky was the limit.

In retrospect it's easy to appreciate how all of this energized the apostles. On the one hand, they were the same people as before. They still had their limits, and they knew them. But the Spirit breathed new life into them, and the apostles then earned the right to take as their own the words of Mary. The Lord began to do great things through them, just as he had done with Mary.

I suspect most of us don't think about how the Spirit can work through us. Most days I assume that the Spirit works primarily through other people. Leadership is the responsibility of others. Action is the responsibility of people of talent and energy. And the works of the Spirit are for people far better posi-

Fr. Eric Hollas, OSB

tioned than I. But of course on all counts I am wrong. All of these items are in my job description too. As God did with Mary and the apostles, the Lord does with me: the Lord can and will do great things.

For centuries preachers have spoken of Pentecost as the birthday of the Church, and that's certainly true. It's the day on which the Spirit came to rest on the apostles and told them to stop sitting around and get on with life. Jesus had come to give life, and to give it in abundance. It was the job of the apostles to carry on with that work.

But the gifts of the Spirit did not end on that one day. I give the apostles credit for realizing that the job was far bigger than they, and they immediately went off and shared responsibility. They breathed on others the life of the Holy Spirit when they baptized. They conferred the Holy Spirit when they imposed hands on others in confirmation. They were the first to recognize that the Spirit was not meant for them alone. The Spirit is meant for all, and the Spirit is a gift that speaks across any and all human boundaries — and not just the linguistic ones.

For the disciples Pentecost was the beginning of a strange and wonderful pilgrimage, and that same Spirit animates us as well. That same Spirit urges us to step out from the sidelines and engage in life to the fullest. The Spirit invites us to let the Lord accomplish some pretty significant things in us — things that could very well surprise us.

So it is that it's nice to celebrate Pentecost once a year. Still, the point of Pentecost is this: it's an everyday sort of feast. It's a reminder of how the Spirit empowers us to reach out and accomplish the impossible, even if it has to be on a weekday.

Father Eric posts a blog online every Monday. You can access it at <https://monkschronicle.wordpress.com/> — On the right side of the page there is information on subscribing. We thank Father Eric for permission to include his reflection in The Oblate.

Feast of Saint Benedict (July 11)



What is it that makes Saint Benedict so popular and his 6th century *Rule* of life so inviting and adaptable even in our own day? Many have suggested that

the answer is to be found precisely in the values Benedict articulated to guide his monastic communities. Those values, among others, include that of community over the individual, stability, hospitality to guests and to each other, attentive listening, obedience, *lectio divina* (that is, meditation and reflection on Scripture or other spiritual reading), and balance in life and work.

These "values," however, cannot be reduced to mere human or universal values devoid of their particular context or content in the *Rule* itself. That context or center of Benedict's *Rule* is Christ, for it is the relationship with Christ that grounds community, provides stability and balance, and forms hospitality.

In the *Rule* this Christo-centrism is focused especially in prayer, in the liturgy of the hours, the Divine Office. For, says Benedict, "We believe that the divine presence is everywhere. . . . But beyond the least doubt we should believe this to be especially true when we celebrate the divine office" (*RB* 19:1-2). Indeed, if Christ is the absolute center of Benedict's *Rule*, so is the *Opus Dei*, the Liturgy of the Hours, at the center of those who would live according to that *Rule*. As Abbot Patrick Regan has written on *RB* 43:3, "Benedict urges us to prefer nothing to the love of Christ. . . . But since Christ is especially present at the office, he can likewise declare that we should prefer nothing to the work of God" ("Encountering Christ in Common Prayer," *Worship* (January 1985), p. 52).

Reverend Maxwell E. Johnson, OblSB

Such values, centered unmistakably and firmly in Christ, are precisely those values needed in our world today. People are looking for real community, places of hospitality and welcome, and Benedict urges us to receive others as Christ in our midst. People search for balance and stability in their lives, a place to call home. Whether that place is a family, a monastery, or a parish community, the *Rule* can be our guide as we seek "to prefer nothing to the love of Christ" so that "in all things God may be glorified" (*ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus*).

Further, I would be remiss as a scholar and teacher of liturgy if I did not acknowledge the great debt that we Anglicans and Lutherans owe to Benedictine monasticism for the liturgical renewal of the 20th century. The Liturgical Movement itself sprang from Benedictine roots first in Europe and then throughout the United States, especially in places like Saint John's Abbey in Minnesota, where I am an Oblate. And of course, in the Anglican tradition we cannot forget Dom Gregory Dix, who was an Anglican Benedictine monk of Nashdom Abbey in England, from which the Abbey of St. Gregory in Three Rivers, Michigan, was founded. I have always felt that Benedictine presence when the worship space is arranged in choir style as it is during Lent and the Easter Season.

Finally, the *Rule of St. Benedict* is about daily and life-long *conversatio* and *conversio*, ongoing conversion of life into Christ and his Mystery of death and resurrection in community. For, as Benedict says in the conclusion to the Prologue to his *Rule*, "we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve to share in his kingdom." Indeed, life according to the *Rule of St. Benedict* is nothing other than living the Paschal Mystery in a particular way, a living out of our baptismal plunge into Christ and its continual nourishment in Word, Eucharist, Prayer, and Community. As such it is open to all who wish to enter as seekers of God.

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Oblates for the Future—Symposium 2018

The Symposium of North American Oblates will be held at St. Gertrude's Monastery in Cottonwood, ID, on October 7-13, 2018, to discuss and discern "Oblates for the Future." The impetus for this meeting came from the Fourth International Oblate Congress held in Rome this past November. Abbot Primate Gregory Polan said it is time to "give wings" to the oblate community as they now are a larger group than vowed monastics. As former Abbot Primate Notker Wolf noted in his homilies there, oblates have moved in less than two decades from a kind of spiritual childhood to the portal of adulthood.

The symposium will include keynote speakers, facilitated discussions, break-out sessions and informal networking and visioning with other oblates. The cost, \$535, includes meals and accommodations from Sunday evening 10/7 through breakfast 10/13, transportation to/from the Lewiston airport. For further information contact the Oblate Office at Saint John's.

Regional Meeting of NAABOD* Minnesota, North Dakota and Winnipeg, Canada

On Saturday 10/13/2018 the Regional meeting of Oblates and Oblate Directors will meet at Saint Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, MN, from 10AM until 4 PM. The topic of the meeting is much the same as the National meeting outlined above. The convener, who attended the International Congress, has invited 7 persons from each monastery in our region to attend this meeting and engage in and explore the opportunities for oblates in the future.

At the International Congress the attendees voted on a five-point vision statement for the future, culled from ideas that emerged in formal small-group discussions over the course of the five-day conference.

- The vision statements reaffirm our dedication to the *Rule* as a "living tradition" in which we seek to model the Benedictine values of community, consensus, peace, balance, hospitality, humility, simplicity and care of the planet in our daily lives.
- We recommitted ourselves to cultivating the Benedictine virtues by listening to the word of God through regular prayer, sacred reading, silence, and the daily rhythms of monastic life.
- We recognized the need for ongoing formation for oblates rooted in the *Rule* which was described as "a spirituality of the heart rather than the head."
- We committed ourselves to being good stewards of the planet, using both our spiritual and material gifts on a local, regional and global level to carry out the vision set down by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*.
- Lastly, we recognized the need for better networking among oblates and between oblates and their monastic communities through social media and other technology.

* North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors





Dear Saint John's Oblates,
 Every year the monks renew their vows in community, or privately if they cannot attend the community retreat. All oblates who do not have the occasion to renew their oblation at Saint John's Abbey during an Oblate Retreat, Day of Reflection or with a local oblate chapter, are encouraged to make their renewal privately and send a completed renewal form (*see below*) to our Oblate Office.

We encourage your ongoing, active interest in the Oblate Program and your personal growth in Benedictine spirituality.

However, if you are no longer interested in the Oblate Program and do not wish to receive our mailings, please take this opportunity to let us know your intention.

For those of you who do wish to strengthen your oblate commitment, following are a few useful tools for your reflection.

Peace! Fathers Michael and Don

DAILY PRAYER *Rule of Benedict: Prologue*

"What, dearest friends, can be sweeter to us than this voice of the Lord inviting us?"

How do I foster a deeper relationship with God through daily prayer?

Do I find the Liturgy of the Hours in some form helpful to prayer?

SPIRITUAL READING *Rule of Benedict: Ch. 4*

"Listen willingly to holy reading."

How do I let myself be nourished and inspired by sacred reading (lectio divina)? When? Where?

Do I read the *Rule* often and are other books on Benedictine themes helpful?

SERVICE TO OTHERS *Rule of Benedict: Ch. 35*

"Let them serve one another."

Am I involved with my family, my neighbors, my faith community, fellow Oblates, and the world?

CONTACT WITH OBLATE DIRECTOR OR OTHER OBLATES *Rule of Benedict: Ch. 72*

"May God lead us all together to everlasting life."

When did I last attend an Oblate Day of Reflection or the July Oblate retreat ?

Am I involved with one of the Oblate chapters?

When was the last time I contacted the Oblate Office via phone (320-363-2018) or by surface/email?

RENEWAL OF OBLATION

Peace! In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I renew my oblation and offer myself to Almighty God as an oblate of Saint John's Abbey. I promise again, before God and all the saints, as my state in life permits: STABILITY OF HEART, FIDELITY TO THE SPIRIT OF THE MONASTIC LIFE, AND OBEDIENCE TO THE WILL OF GOD, according to the *Rule* of Saint Benedict.

NAME _____ **DATE** _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ **EMAIL** _____

Online readers simply print this out and mail it to us.

All others: Please return the form on the insert.

Oblate Office/Saint John's Abbey/PO Box 2015/Collegeville, MN 56321

THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED

NEWSLETTER OF THE OBLATES OF SAINT BENEDICT: *published three times annually (February, June, October).*

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Mark Your Calendar — 2018-2019

July 13-15, 2018: Annual Oblate Retreat

November 18, 2018: Fall Day of Reflection

March 17, 2019: Lenten Day of Reflection

July 19-21, 2019: Annual Oblate Retreat

Regular Chapter Meetings at Collegeville, Red River Valley (Fargo), Joan of Arc (Minneapolis),
See website for details: www.saintjohnsabbey.org/monastic-life/oblates/reg/



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